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BASI Quality Processes: Part One

Dr. Pete Allison



*BASI Courses being observed
by Dr Pete Allison from Edinburgh University*

Over this edition of BASI News and the next, Dr Peter Allison shares his observations on the BASI Quality Assurance Process he viewed in action when he attended the Hintertux Spring Courses to undertake the quality assurance for the alignment process.

Over the last three years, BASI has been working with The University of Edinburgh (Institute for Sport, PE and Health Sciences) to credit rate BASI courses and qualifications using the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). As part of this process (which should be complete for all levels by the end of 2015) the University provides external quality assurance for BASI. In April 2015 I visited Hintertux to see the quality assurance processes in action during Alpine ski and snowboard courses. As a passionate skier this was a perk of the job and a big responsibility which was not to be taken lightly. My own background is in outdoor education and then moral philosophy and experiential learning. I am currently Head of the Graduate School of Education at The University of Edinburgh and responsible for

ensuring that teaching and learning is of the highest possible quality.

This article (Part I) provides an overview of the course level quality assurance systems in place and my observations during the visit. This is complemented by an article on trainer selection (a process that also uses the SCQF characteristics) and continuing professional development by Jaz Lamb (Trainers' Director). Part II, in the next newsletter, will detail annual quality assurance processes and summarises both parts.

All courses run by BASI use a criterion based system for learning and assessment for all of their courses and this is a large part of the credit rating process. This means that Trainers' jobs during courses is to train and assess against a set of criteria. For example, for short turns there are 'four boxes' (see table 1): learning objectives, learning activities, assessment activities and assessment criteria. These are all related to the SCQF five characteristics (i) Knowledge and understanding, (ii) Practice: applied knowledge, skills and understanding, (iii) Generic cognitive skills, (iv) Communication, ICT and

numeracy skills and (v) Autonomy, accountability and working with others. To complement the 'four boxes' there are performance indicators and actions (PIAs) which have been developed by the Trainers (see table 2). These two pages guide the strands (shorts, longs, steep, variables and bumps). Many Trainers also have these documents with them on the hill either electronically or in hard copy. During the week in Hintertux I spent lots of time talking to trainers and trainees on courses about this process. The five SCQF characteristic boxes are written in 'SCQF' speak which sometimes need to be read over a couple of times. These boxes and the whole process is designed to help individuals articulate their learning to people outside the ski industry.

Trainers are responsible for both training and assessment of candidates in their groups. This is a deliberate philosophy which allows for improvement during the course and for ensuring that candidates are performing consistently rather in a one-off manner. This approach also allows Trainers to take into consideration the conditions (snow and weather)



which influence performance. During my visit I noticed a lot of attention to the continual assessment process, lots of discussions among trainers, and many really great teaching approaches from trainers to try and improve people's skiing regardless of their starting point. This attention to creating a really positive learning environment is something I have rarely seen and something that should be praised. It's not a few random cases but consistent across all of the trainers I observed and spoke to.

Course Level Processes

During the Hintertux courses I saw what happens behind the scenes - what Trainers do and what mechanisms are in place to ensure the above standards are applied consistently, regardless of who is running which course.

1. Trainers work hard to ensure that candidates improve. Candidates come to courses with different abilities and trainers concern themselves with improving the way individuals ski (in this case technically but also in teaching and other aspects depending on the course objectives). In other words, they try to move people either towards the level or beyond the level, depending on their ability at the start of the course. To do this they use their skills and experience but they also draw on other trainers' experiences. I watched Trainers do this throughout their courses and their passion for individualised teaching really came through in entirely positive ways. If you have ever done any teaching, you will know how challenging it is to ensure that the teaching is relevant and engaging for everyone in the group, for as much of the time as possible.

2. Trainers share analysis and ideas. Each evening trainers watch videos of each other's groups or discuss observations made during the days (hence groups often work in the same areas on the hill to allow this to happen). They share analysis of skiing and ideas about advice and activities to help the candidate. This typically involves several hours around a TV screen showing each other footage of each other's groups and looking over tables 1 and 2.

3. Most BASI courses have 'trainer support' for some or all of the course. This is a person who is particularly experienced at running that specific course who 'floats' between the different groups and offers advice to the Trainer. This person also leads the above mentioned evening video

TABLE 1 SCQF Benchmarking Sheet Alpine L3 Piste Shorts	
Learning outcome(s); Demonstrate a sound knowledge of the links between tactical and technical threads (as outlined in the PIAs) so that the physical and mental inputs create the desired outcomes to perform consistent and accurate demonstrations of Short Radius turns on a steep Red or Black piste.	Knowledge and Understanding; 9 = Demonstrate an understanding of the scope and features of technical Alpine skiing. Show an integrated knowledge of the skills and techniques. Exhibit a critical understanding of the principal theories, concepts and principles of the fundamental elements in the Central Theme and the five strands. Provide a detailed knowledge and understanding in one or more specialisms at the forefront of developments.
Learning experiences: Experience an increase in proprioceptive and kinaesthetic awareness that promotes consistent accuracy on outputs for varying radii of Long radius turns using a variety of corridor widths and hourglass activities. Gain a clear perception of the differences in Technical thread inputs and associated Body management activities to effect grippy Short turns. How these different types of turn affect speed variations.	Practice: applied knowledge and understanding 9 = Apply knowledge, skills and understanding: in using a range of the principal professional skills, ski techniques, practices and /or materials associated with the skiing in the five strands; - in using a few skills techniques, practices and /or materials that are specialised, advanced and at the forefront of Alpine skiing performance. Practise in a range of professional level contexts that include a degree of unpredictability.
Assessment activities: Short radius turns on red/easy black run. Demonstrate consistent appropriate speed, body management activities to produce smooth flowing transitions from turn to turn.	Generic cognitive skills 9 = Critically identify, analyse, evaluate technical skills. Identify and analyse routine professional problems. Draw from a range of sources in making skiing technique judgements.
Assessment criteria; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous ski/snow contact • Consistency of rounded lines • Consistent control of speed so that skis take a much different line to CoM • Have a clear exit from one turn to the next that carries speed and momentum from arc to arc • Skis are parallel with consistent stance width throughout • Skis travel along their length from the fall-line 	Communication, ICT and numeracy skills 7 = Use a wide range of routine skills and some advanced skills associated to convey complex ideas in a well-structured form in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts. Use a range of standard ICT applications to process and obtain info/data. Use a range of numerical and graphical skills to measure progress in goal setting processes.
	Autonomy, accountability and working with others 9 = Exercise autonomy and initiative in some activities at a professional level. Exercise managerial responsibility for the work of others and for a range of resources. Practise in ways that show awareness of own and others roles and responsibilities. Work under guidance, with specialist practitioners. Seek guidance where appropriate when managing ethical and professional issues in accordance with current professional and/or ethical codes or practice

sessions and ensures that trainers are using the PIAs consistently and maintaining the level (i.e. not been too hard or too soft). The product manager is also present at many courses and provides a further view on candidates' performance in meeting the criteria noted above.

4. Phone a friend. When courses operate 'alone' (i.e. no other courses running parallel) Trainers use alternative methods of support such as phone calls, sharing video and discussion using electronic mediums. This ensures that the courses maintain

a consistent standard throughout seasons and over the years.

5. At the end of every season Trainers have a 'wash up' or review meeting. This happens on the last day of the course and concentrates on capturing what went well and what can be improved about a course, based on the Trainers' views and experiences. This is all fed back to the product manager and contributes to the annual review cycle.

6. At the end of every course Trainers complete a Trainer's course report form which includes collecting feedback on aspects of the course

such as their own performance, candidate performance and peer performance, lecture facilities, administration and any other aspects they wish to comment on.

All of the above mechanisms ensure that the reputation of BASI is maintained as a professional body, training people to very high standards. This system has been developed over many years (in 2012 BASI celebrated its' 50th anniversary) and that experience means that there is an impressive commitment to fairness

and maintaining an Association which prides itself in both technical performance and ability to teach. My observations of the course level processes, the documentation for SCQF credit rating and Trainers during courses, is that they are committed to doing the best they can for candidates' learning and that they deliberate extensively over individuals who are borderline in their performances in relation to the learning objectives and PIAs.

In addition to the course level quality

assurance mechanisms there are also annual cycles of quality assurance processes which not only maintain the standards of BASI but also consider ways of improving all aspects of the courses and the association. These will be detailed in Part II in the following newsletter (119). In the meantime – rest assured that BASI courses are TOP QUALITY in all ways. BASI has great mechanisms in place to ensure course level quality and is obviously doing something right to select and train the Trainers.

TABLE 2

Performance, Indicator, Actions, Short Turns (L3 & L4)

	Performance thread pre-requisites	
Equipment Environment Physical Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Piste focussed skis that are well serviced, 13 – 25m (Eq) Focus and continued concentration on the correct action point during the run (Ps) Athlete hydrated with well managed energy levels (Ph) The right arousal level for the performer in a particular circumstance (Ps) Powerful enough to cope with the forces generated, and remain agile and reactive (Ph) Steep red/ black run (En) 	
INDICATORS	Control of line	Control of speed
Encourage (Accurate outcome)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rounded, symmetrical line Limited/accurate corridor for skis and terrain 2 skis largely parallel, consistent stance width Skis travelling along their length from the fall line Skis take a different line to CoM from the top of the turn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A speed that allows skis to take a different line to CoM Have a clear exit from one turn to the next that carries speed and momentum from arc to arc Consistent and controlled speed through the run
Discourage (Inaccurate outcome)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zig-zag or J-turns Divergent/convergent skis Uncontrolled skids or down stems Loss of ski/snow contact Overly wide or narrow corridor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too slow Speed checks at end of turn Increase in speed down the hill throughout the run

PERFORMANCE ACTIONS – what performers can do to achieve the desired outcomes

Tactical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control speed with line and skilful skidding through the arc rather than excessive skid or check at the end of the turn Correct approach to account for equipment and snow conditions e.g. bullet ice aim for precision and less speed, GS skis make turns with greater vertical distance, SL skis more towards slalom end of the spectrum Be clear on the most effective mixture of the steering elements to achieve the desired type of short turn (slalom, grippy, punchy etc.) Be clear on the corridor, radius and arc length for the run 			
Technical	Throughout Turn	BUILD	WORK	RELEASE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build pressure and release progressively through manipulation of edge and rotation On steeper terrain the skis can be light through the top part of the turn, edge and rotation are still used to prepare the skis to be loaded Feel more pressure on the outside ski through the middle/end part of the turn In transition release the skis on a line which crosses that of the CoM, this will inevitably build edge angle in the new turn Keep skis on the snow even though they may be light in transition 			
Body Management	<p>Movements flow throughout the run. The lower and upper body move in different but coordinated ways. The timing of these movements results in the separation of the line of the skis and the CoM. These movements happen from one turn to the next, not within a single turn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lower body will move more laterally than the hips and shoulders – this is lateral separation Steer the skis more across the hill than the upper body – this is rotational separation that will be more apparent than in longer turns As the skis and CoM diverge after transition, stretch the legs to keep the skis in contact with the snow, taking care to control the tipping of the upper body. This creates a platform through which the skier resists and manages the forces within the turn. Re-centre the CoM fore/aft over the feet in order to work effectively Keep outside leg long during high load phase with load through the middle of the ski The hips follow the direction of travel of the CoM of the skier, this sees the hips fairly square to the skis through the high load phase of the turn Carefully control vertical movements in transition to keep skis on the snow and to be effective early in the next turn Leg flexion may be required to facilitate lateral movements of the legs and upper body in transition as the load is released Use a strong pole plant to control the upper body, aiding the separation through transition 			

